

## Relaxing the Eyes in a Bed of Fat: Remembering *Time Out!*—India

By: [Cynthia Ling Lee](#)

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### **Abstract:**

From February 1-10, 2010, The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage through Dance Advance sponsored a professional development project called *Time Out!*, sending six Philadelphia-based dance artists to New Delhi, India. Facilitated by somatic movement education<sup>1</sup> specialist Mark Taylor and hosted by Bharati Shivaji and Vijayalakshmi of the Centre for Mohiniyattam, the project included Kun-Yang Lin, Vijay Palaparty, Nalini Prakash, Viji Rao, Merian Soto, and Amy Smith. I went along to document the experience in writing.

**Keywords:** Dance | Theory | India | Mohiniyattam

**\*\*\*Note: Full text of article below**

# Relaxing the Eyes in a Bed of Fat: Remembering *Time Out!*—India

BY CYNTHIA LING LEE

From February 1–10, 2010, The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage through Dance Advance sponsored a professional development project called *Time Out!*, sending six Philadelphia-based dance artists to New Delhi, India. Facilitated by somatic movement education<sup>1</sup> specialist Mark Taylor and hosted by Bharati Shivaji and Vijayalakshmi of the Centre for Mohiniyattam, the project included Kun-Yang Lin, Vijay Palaparty, Nalini Prakash, Viji Rao, Merián Soto, and Amy Smith. I went along to document the experience in writing.

During *Time Out!* we spent our mornings physically engaging in experiential anatomy and Mohiniyattam workshops. Afternoons and evenings were split between cultural forays into Delhi and personal process sessions aimed at encouraging the six artists to reflect upon and verbally articulate their creative work. Toward the end of the 10-day residency, the personal process sessions gave way to intercultural collaborations between pairs of participants.

My lens as documentarian of *Time Out!* has been heavily inflected by my dual anchoring in the traditions of American postmodern dance<sup>2</sup> and North Indian Kathak, my past experiences studying and performing in India, my exposure to the critical histories of the neo-classical Indian dance forms,<sup>3</sup> and my long-standing interest in intercultural collaboration. I bring certain values to my writing, resulting in the desire to anchor experience in the textures of a place, to use language as sensual as embodied experience, and to trace the crisscrossing (dis)connections of intercultural discourse and the formation of provisional communities in a global world.

The six artists who formed the “cast” of *Time Out!* are a diverse group whose work troubles easy distinctions between the contemporary and traditional, between western and non-western. With personal roots in Puerto Rico, Taiwan, Germany, India, and the United States, their artistic training spans Bharatanatyam, samba, tai chi, postmodern dance-theater, and beyond.

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<sup>1</sup> Somatic movement education refers to a wide range of body-mind practices including experiential anatomy, movement re-patterning, and alignment techniques, developed by people such as F. M. Alexander, Moshe Feldenkrais, Irmgard Bartenieff, Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, Emilie Conrad, and others. Martha Eddy differentiates somatic movement education, which dancers have been instrumental in developing, from two other main branches of the somatic world, somatic psychology and somatic bodywork (Eddy, 2009). The term “soma,” coined by Thomas Hanna, refers to a body experienced from within; it emphasizes “the soma’s alive and changing status, replete with cellular intelligence and a capability of perceiving itself” (Eddy, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Postmodern dance emerged in the United States in the 1960s as various choreographers from modern dance backgrounds, including members of the Judson Dance Theater, were seized with an urge to democratize and re-conceptualize dance. Common postmodern strategies have included foregrounding the medium of dance (movement for its own sake rather than as expressive meaning-making); the use of task-based or pedestrian movement; cross-disciplinary fertilization with the other arts; compositional methods such as chance, repetition, and juxtaposition; the refusal of theatrical illusion; and performing in non-traditional spaces such as galleries, lofts, and gyms. While postmodern dance is distinct from postmodernism in other art forms, it does share the use of “pastiche, irony, playfulness, historical reference, the use of vernacular materials, the continuity of culture, an interest in process over product, breakdowns of boundaries between art forms and between art and life, and new relationships between artist and audience” with other postmodern forms (Banes, 1987).

<sup>3</sup> My knowledge is confined mainly to Bharatanatyam (which dominates critical English-language academic scholarship), Kathak, and to a lesser extent Odissi. Unfortunately I have not been able to access serious critical scholarship on Mohiniyattam. For further reading on Bharatanatyam, please see the work of Avanthi Meduri (1996) and Uttara Coorlawala (2004); for Kathak, Margaret Walker (2004) and Pallabi Chakravorty (2000); for Odissi, Ananya Chatterjea (2004); and for Mohiniyattam, Bharati Shivaji and Vijayalakshmi (2004) and Bharati Shivaji (1986).

## Sanskriti

Our home base in India is the artist's retreat of Sanskriti: a peaceful oasis of blue sky, green expanses of close-clipped lawns, terracotta sculptures glowing earthily under the pour of sun. A far cry from the car-horn-polluted chaos I have come to associate with urban India, we stay in spartan, stylish little bungalows and wake to the rhythmic sounds of sweeping. Our temporary artistic community here includes a textile specialist, an American and a British visual artist, and an Indian poet, also in residence. Sanskriti's grounds are dotted with architectural arches arcing over lily ponds, groves of champas and banyan trees, textile and terracotta museums, and modest fields of brinjal and okra which yield produce to be cooked for the daily vegetarian meals. Everywhere the modern coexists with the seemingly old; as you walk through the grounds, traditional and contemporary sculptures weathered by sun and wind seem to address the question: "What is really old and what is really new?" This question threads throughout our residency, touching everything from our learning of Mohiniyattam to the artists' personal reflections on their work.



The outdoor terracotta museum at Sanskriti.

## Encountering Mohiniyattam

Feet touching each other in samapada (first position parallel), we stand in a position of readiness: weight forward on the balls of our feet, torsos opening with attention. Bharati recites a repeating pattern of rhythmic syllables, punctuated by claps of the hand: dheem - tat tat dheem - tat tat dheem - tat tat ta - digi taka.... Our eyes dart to the right with a lateral neck isolation, then to the left. We shift our weight forward on the diagonal as we turn out, each torso snaking luxuriously over the right foot and then the left as we shift back and forth through a deep half-sitting position, ending with a return to our original parallel position, rolling up through the spine sequentially to gaze forward, neck undulating in anticipation of the next cycle. See [related videos here](#).

They say Mohiniyattam's movement comes from the swaying of the palm trees in Kerala: flowing, sequential, circular, and continuous, it requires meharakam, a loosening of the spine. Moving from the inside out, the dancer initiates movement from the core rather than the periphery. A buoyancy, one's center rising and falling like waves, sends the torso in curvilinear pathways that travel through sagittal and horizontal planes. One moves through rhythmic accents, gently arriving and circling around rhythmic punctuation, rather than striking crisply and sharply. Practitioners speak of this all-female form as embodying lasya (femininity) and being steeped in srngara rasa (love), as epitomized by the mythological enchantress called Mohini.

When watching a documentary on Mohiniyattam, I notice that Bharati Shivaji's style of Mohiniyattam has fuller, more lush torso movement than the style from Kalamandalam, Kerala's major institution of traditional performing arts.<sup>4</sup> The Kalamandalam style is more bound and crisper in its footwork, reminding me of a soft version of Bharatanatyam. This difference highlights the particular stance Bharati has taken in her reconstruction and development of Mohiniyattam. While guided by classical principles of codification and repertoire, her approach to

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<sup>4</sup> Founded by poet Vallathol Narayana Menon in 1927, Kerala Kalamandalam is a university dedicated to the performing arts of Kerala, funded by the Cultural Affairs Department of the government of Kerala. [Wikipedia entry](#).

developing Mohiniyattam has emphasized regionalization, positing authenticity in the dance form's rootedness in Kerala's local culture. This strategy has included the removal of visible Bharatanatyam influences within her style of Mohiniyattam, influences that historically came into being because Swati Tirunal, who ruled Kerala in the 19th century, invited the Tanjore Quartet to his court to revitalize the form.<sup>5</sup>

Bharatiji grows teary-eyed when speaking of her life's work of reconstructing Mohiniyattam, calling it "a little ignored neglected baby" "sandwiched between Kathakali<sup>6</sup> and Bharatanatyam" that was "ignored in its own land." Pained at Mohiniyattam's limited repertoire and dissatisfied with the fact that many of its items—varnam, jatiswaram, padam, tillana—were rooted in the Carnatic musical system and the Bharatanatyam repertoire, Bharati sought to energize and expand Mohiniyattam's repertoire through immersive study of Kerala's other art forms: architecture, literature, music, dance-drama and theater. As a result, she has created new repertoire that utilizes the percussion instruments, singing style, ragas (melodic modes) and talas (rhythmic cycles) indigenous to Kerala, where text is in the Malayali language and abhinaya (emotional expression) bears influences from Kerala's Sanskrit theater form of Koodiyattam.<sup>7</sup>

While Bharati Shivaji has striven to strengthen Mohiniyattam's roots through regionalization, the choreographic work of her daughter Vijayalakshmi actively foregrounds a global approach to Mohiniyattam. A feisty, strong woman who has a "great desire to breathe fresh air" and not be "frozen in time," Vijayalakshmi has choreographed *Swan Lake* in Mohiniyattam, collaborated with African drummers, and infused Mohiniyattam with the martial arts form of Kalaripayattu. Bright-eyed, she declares: "We are an open world now." I am reminded of how cultural forms adapt and reinvent themselves for new contexts, follow nonlinear geographical trajectories, experience historical ruptures, and are imaginatively sutured. Indeed, global flows underpin dance regardless of whether practitioners are reproducing a discourse of cultural "tradition," boundary-breaking "innovation," or something in between.<sup>8</sup> Ready examples of the geographical dislocation that is an inevitable part of cultural production in our globalizing age may be seen in the work and experiences of *Time Out!*'s participants: Merián performing

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<sup>5</sup> The [Tanjore or Tanjavur Quartet](#) were four brothers who made seminal contributions to what is now modern-day Bharatanatyam. Living in the 19th century, they were employed in the court of Serfoji II in Tanjavur.

<sup>6</sup> Kathakali is a form of dance-drama from Kerala and perhaps the classical dance-form most commonly associated with the state.

<sup>7</sup> It is interesting that, despite her strong emphasis on Mohiniyattam's regional rootedness in Kerala, Bharati developed Mohiniyattam as a geographical and cultural outsider, being a non-Malayali based in New Delhi, the country's cultural and political capital. Considering classical dance in a national context reveals the government's mission of supporting dance that reflects India's regional specificities: "the underlying nationalist agenda of building a cultural framework that demonstrated the government's favored theme of unity-in-diversity that was supposed to be part of age-old 'tradition' (Chatterjea, 2004, 150). It is probable that Bharati's situation in Delhi allowed her to position the form in a national context differently than if she had lived in Kerala, and she openly acknowledges that her extensive knowledge of the classical forms of Bharatanatyam and Odissi assisted her greatly in developing Mohiniyattam. As Chatterjea states, "because Bharatanatyam was the first [Indian dance form] to claim its 'classical' status, it effectively set a clear model for how 'classicism' might be interpreted...This left dancers and advocates of several other dance forms, in particular Odissi, Kuchipudi, and Mohiniyattam, in a quandary, for while they felt strongly that these forms had their aesthetic and regional specificities, they also recognized the necessary uniformity of any notion of 'classicism,' and that, in order to support their claims to classicism, they would have to work with the already established model" (2004, 147). Bharati's training in Bharatanatyam, the first of India's dance forms to attain classical status, gave her first-hand knowledge of its system of codification, repertoire development suitable to a concert format, and adherence to Sanskrit treatises, all of which are integral to reconstructing a classical form. Moreover, Bharati had witnessed Kelucharan Mahapatra's process of reconstructing Odissi while accompanying him as a singer. His use of temple sculptures to inspire dance poses influenced her to engage in multidisciplinary research on Kerala's art forms, which she creatively applied to Mohiniyattam. The obvious creative agency employed by classical dance artists such as Kelucharan Mahapatra and Bharati Shivaji in developing their forms troubles static notions of cultural tradition, suggesting that the line between cultural preservation and creative experimentation is not as stark as one would think. I must note that the politics and process of classicization is an immensely complex issue that is beyond the scope of this essay to address fully. For further reading, please see Coorlawala (2004) and Chatterjea (2004).

<sup>8</sup> While the global roots of self-consciously hybrid choreographic work are obvious, it may be less obvious how tradition is reproduced through global flows. Here are a couple of examples: immigrant communities recreate homeland through their dances from across oceans, reconstituting fragmented memory as cultural survival. Also, outsiders—anthropologists, tourists, international funding bodies, and national political agendas—are often instrumental to preserving a "local" cultural tradition.



deconstructions of her identity as a Puerto Rican woman in New York, Amy learning Ghanaian dance and Bharatanatyam at Wesleyan University in Connecticut, and Vijay reconstituting and deepening his understanding of classical repertoire learned during crash courses in India and in Washington D.C.

## Experiential Anatomy and Beyond: The Eye

We release the weight of our skulls into our palms. The warmth of our hands creates a soft, melting sensation around the eyeballs, which drop downwards with gravity. Mark explains that the eyes are supported by fat that becomes malleable with heat. "Relax the eye in its bed of fat," he says. We talk about the difference between active reaching eyes and soft receptive eyes, eyes that allow the light to fall into them.

Pulling out a plastic model of an eyeball, Mark shows us the three layers of the eye: (1) the outer fibrous tunic, (2) the middle vascular tunic, and (3) the inner nervous tunic. Collectively, we model the three tunics in our bodies: The people on the outside form a tight, strong, interlocking sheath, and the people in the middle circle undulate in a gushy, blood and fluid fashion, while the two people in the center pop, jump, and twitch, embodying the excitatory nature of the nervous tunic's rods and cones. We learn that cones are used for focusing on detail and specificity, while rods are used for broad, peripheral vision.

We then move on to the six muscles that control the movements of the eye. Each of us holds a spoon (used earlier to stir the sugar in our mid-morning tea) and focuses our eyes upon it. Trying to move the eyes smoothly without skipping, we track our spoons up and down, side to side, on the diagonals, in circles, in figure eights. I recognize certain eye movements as characteristic of particular dance-forms: the side-to-side glances of Bharatanatyam, the diagonal eye movements of Kuchipudi and Balinese dance, the figure eights of Mohiniyattam. My eyes, habituated to being kept strictly in the center of the eye-socket by my Kathak training, ache slightly.

Later, Bharati explains how the eyes are used in various performance forms of Kerala. In the Sanskrit theater form of Koodiyattam, the eyes are storytellers. She says of a famous Koodiyattam guru with whom she studied in Kerala: "Just with his eyes, he would tell the whole Mahabharata."<sup>9</sup> Holding her fingertips together like a lotus bud, her eyes widen, focus expanding outwards as her fingertips bloom apart. She also describes how Kathakali dancers wake at 3 a.m. to do their eye exercises, applying ghee to lubricate the eye and inserting dal<sup>10</sup> in the eye socket to keep the eyelids open. Many of the exercises we try



Bharati Shivaji teaching abhinaya (emotional expression) at Sanskriti.



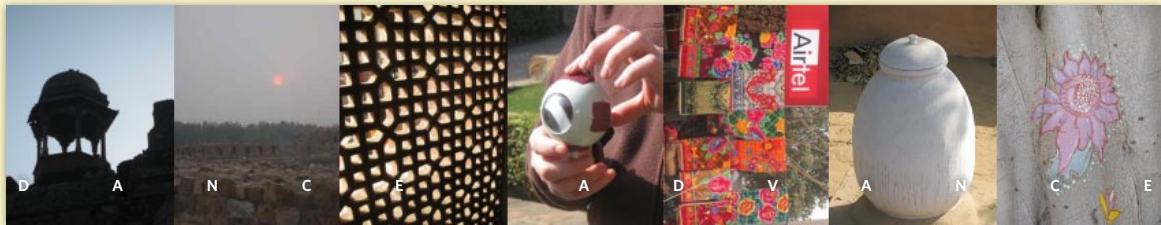
Mark Taylor explaining the anatomy of the eye on the grounds of Sanskriti.

<sup>9</sup> The Mahabharata and the Ramayana are the two major Hindu epics of India. The Mahabharata describes the war between two ruling families, the Pandavas and Kauravas.

<sup>10</sup> Lentil.

with her—moving the eyes up and down, side to side, and in figure eights—correlate with the ones we learned from Mark, though the emphasis on emotion and storytelling differs.

These sessions on the eyes provoke a rich and free-wheeling discussion on the use of the gaze across cultures and disciplines. Amy talks about the three gazes used in Jacques LeCoq’s physical theater work: internal focus, focus in real space, and horizon focus.<sup>11</sup> Vijay expands this idea of how focus can be used to delineate spatial boundaries through the performer’s choice to “receive” or “shoot out energy” through his or her eyes, describing how a Bharatanatyam dancer uses her or his gaze to create a sense of intimacy in a padam (a love poem rendered through abhinaya, or emotional expression). The discussion touches upon ballet’s use of horizon focus, the emphasis on intricate detail in Chinese dance (rods), and a critique of the “deadened gaze” of postmodern dance in the ‘80s and ‘90s. It ends on an emotional, personal note: We hear about Merián’s blind grandmother who “saw with her fingers,” Merián’s own blindness in one eye, and how she asks her students to blindfold themselves, inviting softening, breath, and seeing with the inner eye.



Photos from left to right: Architectural detail of the fort of Purana Quila; bird's eye view of Delhi taken from the ruins of Tughlukabad; lattice-work window in the Qutab Mosque, part of the Qutab Minar complex in Mehrauli, Delhi; Mark Taylor holding a model of the human eye while teaching at Sanskriti; billboard for Airtel, a cell phone company, hovers above colorful rugs being sold alongside a road in Delhi; urn on the grounds of Sanskriti; painting on a banyan tree on the grounds of Sanskriti. Two photos on right by Vijay Palaparty.

## Delhi's Textures

We tumble into white tourist vans to brave the 45-minute traffic-filled ride to the city, chatting, falling asleep, practicing jatis<sup>12</sup> and arguing with the driver about tips and the different fees for foreigners. Delhi: ancient Mughal<sup>13</sup> monuments, masses of humanity, chic Mangalorean<sup>14</sup> restaurants, haggling with vendors in Dilli Haat and Janpath, the street suddenly slick with rain. Delhi is the Jama Masjid<sup>15</sup> at night, lit by the moon and city lights, our group huddling into a Mughlai restaurant to eat goat curry swimming in oil cooked by descendants of the chefs for Mughal emperors (so the menu claimed). It is riding rickshaw two by two, balancing our feet precariously, through narrow twisting alleys in Old Delhi, past the tangles of electrical wire stolen off the grid, past stores tumbling with fabrics and buttons and salwar kameez<sup>16</sup> and costume jewelry, the rickshaw wallahs<sup>17</sup> weaving skillfully between moving bodies to arrive suddenly in a street of centuries-old havelis.<sup>18</sup> It is sitting on a low wooden bench, impure

<sup>11</sup> Jacques Le Coq founded [L'École Internationale de Théâtre](#), a school of mime and theater, in Paris in 1956. His influences include *Commedia dell'Arte*, mask work, and the ideas of Jacques Copeau.

<sup>12</sup> Rhythmic patterns used in Bharatanatyam.

<sup>13</sup> The Mughals invaded the North Indian subcontinent and ruled from the 1500s to the 1800s, bringing Persian Islamic culture with them. “Mughal” is the Persian word for Mongol, reflecting the fact that the Mughals were descended from Mongol stock in Turkestan. [More info.](#)

<sup>14</sup> Mangalore is a city in Karnataka, South India.

<sup>15</sup> The Jama Masjid is one of Delhi’s most important mosques.

<sup>16</sup> A salwar kameez is a long caftan worn over pajama bottoms.

<sup>17</sup> Rickshaw drivers.

<sup>18</sup> A haveli is a large traditional house, often with a courtyard.

because I am menstruating, as the others tour the Jain<sup>19</sup> temple embedded with real onyx and diamonds and gold (so the guides claimed).

In Delhi we see monuments of raw stone lit up gold in the sunlight, the carved intricate patterns of India's first mosque built from parts of a Hindu temple: that historic melding of Islamic and indigenous Indian cultures that also gave birth to Kathak and Hindustani music. The interculturalism of imperialism: first conquer, then syncretize. We wander through the abandoned city of Tughlukabad,<sup>20</sup> its weathered stone formations the only remaining traces of daily life lived long ago. We stop in late to the Kathak Vasantotsav Festival where technical delays and drawn-out honoring of gurus intersperse casually with performances. We watch kathak master Birju Maharaj and thumri<sup>21</sup> singer Girija Devi improvise about Holi (the spring festival) together. Delhi is diving into the social structure of haggling, being reminded of our position as foreign tourists as we negotiate differences in language and currency values; it is the Taiwanese members in the group masquerading as Manipuris<sup>22</sup> to secure local entrance fees to cultural sites; it is the humor of cultural (mis)translations, Merián approving how openly India embraced protected sex until she finds out the little silver packets sold by street vendors are filled with fragrant flavored tobacco, supari, not condoms.

## Getting to Know Each Other: Personal Process Sessions

The activity we spent the most time on during *Time Out!* was the personal process sessions, which focused on articulating one's self-definition as an artist. These sessions were instrumental to building a respectful intercultural community, for they gave us insight into and compassion for each other's journeys, passions, and struggles. At the same time, they offered the artists the professional opportunity to refine how they speak about their work.

Each of the six participating artists was given a session to articulate his or her work, artistic persona, and professional trajectory. While they were free to present themselves however they saw fit, Mark gave the artists a series of suggestions to consider during their presentations. These included constructing an "elevator speech" about their work; considering whether they were craftsmen, explorers, iconoclasts, innovators, or visionaries in their art-making; identifying whether they operate within comfort zones, take risks, or are refining a body of work. As such, these sessions heavily emphasized verbal articulation, supported by video, over the experiential sharing of individual creative processes and physical practices.

The artists' verbal self-articulations were as various as their choreographic styles: sometimes clear-cut, sometimes tumbling and nonlinear. They also varied in terms of the extent to which each person's choreographic persona was intertwined with his or her personal journey. This fact brought up several interesting situations, including the tendency of South Asian dance critics to conflate an artist's work with the person (Vijay's observation), the feminist position that one's political-aesthetic work should be grounded in the personal, and the sometimes problematic expectation for artists of color to have their work directly grounded in their "culture." It also became clear that the difference between a creative and a performing artist (choreographer vs. dancer), a fundamental distinction for funders in the West, was far more blurred for traditional practitioners in a South Asian context.

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<sup>19</sup> Jainism is one of India's religions.

<sup>20</sup> Founded by the Mughal emperor Tughluq.

<sup>21</sup> Thumri is a form of North Indian light classical music whose lyrics are usually romantic in nature.

<sup>22</sup> Manipur is a state in Northeast India.

To communicate what I came to know about these artists during these personal process sessions, I have written the following series of artist portraits.



Amy Smith at the terracotta museum of Sanskriti.

Amy Smith is a playful scientist, a postmodern pop-culture intellectual, for whom "I" bleeds easily into "we," high art into low art, dance into theater into everyday life. She is one of three artistic directors of Headlong Dance Theater, an experimental dance company that is artistically and administratively collaborative. A self-professed "outsider" in the American contemporary dance scene, she aligns Headlong's work with European dance-theater. Given her distaste for autobiography and mining the self, conceptual ideas from literature or pop culture often spark Amy's choreographic investigations, and movement vocabulary is developed according to the needs of a piece. She creates movement with the belief that "anyone can dance" and that "pretty is the enemy of beautiful," finding inspiration in everything from the Mars Rover to people's movement during earthquakes to idiosyncratic "impossible unisons." Improvisation, which she studied with Richard Bull and Cynthia Novack, is her first love: its endlessness and imperfectability, its marriage

of the body and brain. Questions that she brings into the future: What is Amy's individual artistic voice when not intertwined with those of her collaborators? Having worked more as choreographer rather than performer for many years, what does her moving, feeling, dancing body want?

Vijay Palaparty is co-founder, along with Nalini Prakash, of The Spilling Ink Project, a multi-arts platform that integrates Indian classical dance with music, literary, and visual arts. Vijay learned Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam in an intensive and fragmented fashion, traveling to India for crash courses over the course of 20 years. Dance provided a way to connect to his cultural roots from his diasporic position as the child of immigrant parents in Cleveland. These days, he combines performance of classical repertoire with original choreography informed by his expertise in writing and graphic design. His choreography is not so much a departure from tradition as a reexamination of what he has been taught from a more mature, questioning place. He often uses textual interventions to examine what traditional material means to him, splicing in monologues by an English-speaking actress to incite a dialogue with the original poetic text. Vijay also enacts conversations between classical Indian dance forms, collaborating with Odissi dancers or translating a jatiswaram from Kuchipudi to Bharatanatyam. When making work, he often starts with an image such as an icon or sculpture, and he is heavily informed by graphic and philosophical binaries—up and down, focus and schizophrenia, uniformity and randomness. As Vijay moves into the future, he wants to enter the context surrounding his classical forms more deeply, as well as to find a more complementary relationship between his professional and artistic lives.



Vijay Palaparty demonstrates vira rasa (the heroic emotion) at Purana Quila.

Merián Soto is an intensely somatic bad-ass puertorriqueña postmodern improviser salsera who builds community on and off-stage. Two major currents run through her choreographic work: the transformative, healing potential of somatic practice and a concern with voicing Puerto Rican identity in all its complexity. I also see her work as the politicizing and appropriation of postmodern dance by the margins, re-voicing its values by employing its





Merián Soto with her ubiquitous camera on the grounds of Sanskriti.

techniques (pastiche, use of vernacular forms, reconfiguring performer-audience relations, dissolving the boundary between art and life) for communities of color. Glimpses of her body of work: She celebrates being too much, seamlessly moving from salsa into extension, her body's performance of hybridity belying the rigid cultural stereotypes articulated by the nasal narrow-minded voiceover. Blindfolded, carrying a basket of flowers, she enters through the audience; guided to the altar by their hands, she is the offering, bathed in yellow light, remembering her blind grandmother. Seven families from the South Bronx on stage: kids running around the kitchen while women prop up the falling man, the drug addict. Guerilla dances in the woods. In addition to creating her own work, Merián teaches and supports other artists, notably through cofounding the multidisciplinary South Bronx artists' collective, Papatian. As she moves into the future, she wants simplification, to learn how to levitate, to continue dancing for the rest of her life.

Boundlessly energetic and hungry for new experiences, dancer-choreographer Viji Rao has performed in work as diverse as theatrical presentations theater with Peter Brook, and contemporary dance with Shobana Jeyasingh. She was born into a dancing family in Bangalore with her father as her classical Bharatanatyam guru, yet the urge to be a border-crosser struck her first as a teenager, when she braved her father's disapproval to break away and study the Kalakshetra style of Bharatanatyam. Since then her dancing and dance-making has taken her to London, Philadelphia, and all over India, her training expanding to include contemporary dance and the Indian martial arts form of Chhau. The artistic director of Three Aksha dance company, Viji makes choreographic work encompassing (1) classical Bharatanatyam, (2) expressing new subjects in Bharatanatyam, and (3) contemporary work, sometimes in the form of intercultural collaboration. Recent projects have included choreographing mathematics and geometry in Bharatanatyam and collaboration with a video designer that connects blood-hungry Iraqi soldiers to the mythology of Durga and Shiva. As she moves into the future, she is interested in continuing to find ways to carry her work outside the Indian community in Philadelphia.



Viji Rao in the ruins of Tughlukabad.



Nalini Prakash practices reciting jathis (rhythmic compositions of Bharatanatyam) during a long, traffic-filled drive to the city of Delhi from Sanskriti.

Down to earth and self-effacing, Nalini Prakash strikes me as a steady flame fueled by clear conviction and deeply grounded knowledge. Born in India to a German mother and a father from Karachi, Nalini whole-heartedly embraced Bharatanatyam from the age of three, virtually raised as her guru Sudharani Raghupathy's child. In the process she adopted South Indian Hindu religion and culture, which offered a cultural rootedness not available at home. Her 30 years of devotion to Bharatanatyam includes performing extensively as a classical dancer throughout India, teaching as a guru and founding educational institutions in Coonoor, and creating original choreography within a classical frame. When choreographing, Nalini engages in extensive research, be it on the songs of the poet-king Swati Tirunal or the stories and music surrounding the river/goddess Godavari as it flows from Maharastra to

the Bay of Bengal. Her work is usually religious, serving as “food for the soul,” and she creates movement typified by balance and comfort in her body, avoiding physical discord. Most recently, Nalini’s study of dance therapy at Drexel University has opened up her path as a dance artist, challenging culturally learned bodily boundaries and offering an approach to dance that differs from the performer’s projection of the self. As Nalini moves into the future, she wants to release her hold on a mapped-out, highly structured life to allow for a more free-spirited approach of following the wind where it may take her. She is also happy to have reconnected with her performer self through working with Vijay on their Spilling Ink Project, which has opened up a realm of collaborating and exchanging ideas with other artists.

Once a scrappy little boy mesmerized by martial artists in Taiwanese night markets, Kun-Yang Lin is now a sophisticated mover who rides breath, fluidity, and an inward emotional intensity. His circuitous, defiant journey as a dancer starts with him growing up after World War II in a military village in Taiwan, where he was drawn to movement wherever he could find it: in figure skating, martial arts, the calligrapher’s brush-stroke, American disco dancing in clubs. From these unruly, ad hoc beginnings, he defied his Catholic military father to pursue formal dance training at the Taiwan National University of the Arts, where professors shook their heads and told him he didn’t have a proper dancer’s body. Determined to prove them wrong, he compensated for his lack of external mobility using breath, though his body is also injury-marred from years of forcing it. After a brief stint improvising in Europe, he moved to New York out of a wish to “work through [American modern] dance history,” studying Graham, Cunningham, release technique, and “rolling around on the floor at Performance Space 122.” These days, he foregrounds his status as an immigrant Asian artist through choreographing work that filters western contemporary dance through an “Asian sensibility”<sup>23</sup> for his company, Kun-Yang Lin and Dancers. As Kun-Yang moves into the future—balancing performance, choreography, teaching, and running his center, Chi Movement Arts—he looks for more structure, stability, and balance in his collaborative relationships, both personal and artistic.



Kun-Yang Lin poses with a sculpture on the grounds of Sanskriti.



Mark Taylor explaining the anatomy of the eye on the grounds of Sanskriti.

*Arrival.* Working on the “spectrum between healing and art-making,” Mark Taylor directs the Center for BodyMindMovement. His current work as a somatic movement educator is informed by many years as a choreographer (1978–2002). Nourished by stints as artistic director of Mark Taylor and Friends (New York) and Dance Alloy (Pittsburgh), Mark’s choreographic interests included movement investigation, community-inclusive and site-specific work, and intercultural collaboration. *Inviting us to a space of deep and sensitive listening.* Mark’s grounding in somatic movement practices (Body-Mind Centering®, Alexander Technique, Bartenieff Fundamentals, and Pilates) started out of a wish to train his body efficiently; later when his son was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, somatic movement therapy offered a meaningful and effective way of treating him. During the *Time Out!* residency, Mark’s somatic movement workshops supported his work as facilitator of the

<sup>23</sup> Though Kun-Yang often uses the word “Asian” when speaking about his work, it can be a little difficult to generalize what an Asian sensibility might be, given the vast diversity of the performing arts of Asia. Based on my limited exposure to his work, the Asian movement influences I can clearly trace include the use of tai chi principles, manifesting in a strong emphasis on flow and breath, and an occasional reference to Javanese and Balinese forms.

artists' self-articulation: "Because mind, psyche, emotions, and spirituality are embedded in and expressed by the tissues of the body, the development of deeper self-awareness on a physical level allows us to witness ourselves at those other levels as well." *Asking gentle, probing questions.* While Mark no longer self-identifies as a choreographer, he uses the full range of his "choreographic tool kit"—"rhythm and phrasing, spatial dynamics, and energy modulation"—when teaching somatic movement classes, which are carefully planned and yet improvised, responsive in the moment to the needs of the students. As Mark moves into the future, he wants to learn to sustain himself and his life as he continues to try to facilitate transformation in others. *The soul moves at the pace of human walking.*

Hands to her cheek, Bharati Shivaji gazes tenderly at an unseen baby, consumed by motherly love. Having devoted her life to expanding the profile of Mohiniyattam through her work as a performer, choreographer, researcher, guru, and director of the Delhi-based Centre for Mohiniyattam, Bharati's self-perception as an artist is inextricably tied up with the status and development of the dance-form itself. Raised in a South Indian family with a classical Carnatic singer as a mother, Bharati first trained in Bharatanatyam before seeing Ragini Devi perform Mohiniyattam and falling in love with the form. Her journey began when she was offered a Sangeet Natak Akademi scholarship to research the form in its local context in Kerala, delving into the region's literary, musical, sculptural, and other performance traditions. Bharati regards her early work as "strengthening" the form, developing new pedagogical approaches and expanding its repertoire through interrelation with Kerala's other art forms while maintaining Mohiniyattam's essential lyricism. She frames her innovations, such as introducing sopana music, folk legends from Malabar, and Vedic scriptures into the form's repertoire, as being at the service of tradition. In Bharati's style of Mohiniyattam, sinuous continuous movement initiates from the core, and a meditative connection is built between the body and mind, typified emotionally and rhythmically by a slow gradual build. Looking back over her career, she feels immense gratitude that Mohiniyattam has grown from a "neglected baby" into a "beautiful enchantress." Having established a comprehensive repertoire and vocabulary for the form, her recent work focuses more on concept and theme.



Bharati Shivaji performs a lullaby in abhinaya (emotional expression) during an informal showing for *Time Out*'s participants.



Vijayalakshmi speaking animatedly at Purana Quila.

"Very traditional but with a mind of her own": this is how Vijayalakshmi describes the protagonist of Unniarcha, her choreography that combines Mohiniyattam with the martial arts form of Kalaripayattu. Yet the phrase also describes Vijaya perfectly. Daring, feminist, and committed to a "pan-Indian, global perspective" on Mohiniyattam, Vijaya was raised in "a family of performing artists" with renowned Mohiniyattam guru Bharati Shivaji as her mother. While the challenge of being "being noticed under the banyan tree" might have stunted others, Vijaya's unwavering commitment to Mohiniyattam tradition is complemented by a tenacious artistic vision all her own. A spirited, strong-willed spark amidst the soft, feminine, swaying world of Mohiniyattam, Vijaya is interested in bringing a different kind of womanly strength to her form, one that "modern women can relate to." She also works to extend Mohiniyattam beyond the boundaries of Kerala, creating works with diverse artistic influences and collaborators, using music from Bengal,

collaborating with Chhau dancers and African drummers, and choreographing *Swan Lake* with an entire corps de ballet in Mohiniyattam. As she moves into the future, she strives to find a graceful balance between her familial obligations in the United States, where her husband and daughter live, and her dance career in India.

Soft-spoken, gentle, and more comfortable expressing herself through dance than through words, Manjula Murthy strikes me as embodying *lasya*, the quality of feminine softness so typical of Mohiniyattam.

Hailing from a small town in Karnataka, South India, she initially learned Bharatanatyam for eight years, after which she joined Nrityagram for nine years and changed her specialization to Mohiniyattam. Nrityagram, founded by the late Odissi dancer Protima Gauri Bedi as a modern re-envisioning of the gurukul, is a community in an isolated natural setting where members are encouraged to devote themselves single-mindedly to dance. At the time that Manjula was a member, Nrityagram offered residential training programs in several Indian classical dance forms; they also housed the Nrityagram Ensemble, a company that currently performs Odissi internationally.



Manjula Murthy at Purana Quila.

After Nrityagram, Manjula became a disciple of Bharati Shivaji and is now one of her senior disciples. Generally Manjula situates herself more as a performing artist than a choreographer. Deeply committed to keeping the “dying art form” of Mohiniyattam alive by staying within the framework of its tradition, she also expresses the desire to work in a more exploratory fashion with artists from different backgrounds.

Some of her choreographic explorations have included *Panchavadyan*, a work that combines the soft movements of Mohiniyattam with the intricate, vigorous rhythmic patterns of Kerala percussion, and *Kalasmi*, a work about the sometimes devastating relationship between human beings and nature.

## Finding Common Ground: Collaborations

Once participants got to know one another through the personal process sessions, the stage was set for a meeting ground, which took the form of intercultural collaborative sessions during the last couple of days. Mark assigned three pairs of artists to work together: Amy and Vijay, Nalini and Kun-Yang, and Merián and Viji. For each group, a period of physically engaging with each other’s choreographic processes gave way to envisioning a project where their common interests would intersect. Perhaps because the personal process sessions had emphasized verbal articulation, many of the projects were presented in verbal rather than physical form. Nalini, Kun-Yang, Merián, and Viji shared their projects verbally, while Amy and Vijay did so through an improvised performance structure. The projects had the luminous potential of seeds formed from an encounter and dreaming about possibilities together. Doubtless they would have transformed significantly during the negotiations and discoveries of an extended collaboration.

## Nalini and Kun-Yang: Hindu and Taoist Philosophical Systems

*“I want to understand the person I am with before entering a relationship with them.” -Nalini Prakash*

In the mid-afternoon sun, two bodies stand on a broad swath of close-clipped, green lawn. Facing each other, they move, mirroring each other, one following the other intently in a listening that is also movement. When he leads, he moves in continuous, breath-inspired flow. She, on the other hand, leads with direct, geometrical movements underpinned by a clear, rhythmic logic.



Later, I find them sitting at a bench along the lawn, clustered close around a open journal page covered with ballpoint pen diagrams, lists, and terminology, the pen moving rapidly to catch their animated conversation. They have found common ground in the intersections between the philosophies of Hinduism and Taoism that manifest in Bharatanatyam and tai chi. They compare the eight points of Bagua<sup>24</sup> to the eight directions of Hindu temple tradition. The principle of yin/yang, in which the dark and light balance each other in an interconnected relationship, is seen as similar to that of Shiva Nataraj, who manifests the principle that good and evil are always working together. The dots in the classic yin/yang symbol, the stillness around which everything else flows, are compared to the third eye of Shiva, the inner eye.

## Merián and Viji: Soil and Water

*"All of yesterday you followed me blindly." (Merián)*

*"I trusted you." (Viji)*

I happen upon Viji and Merián at a picnic table near a huge banyan tree, deep in a many-tendrilled, free-ranging discussion. They are both drawn to working with natural elements. Viji is drawn to soil, or earth, as a metaphor for the culture we come from, whereas Merián has had water as a central theme throughout much of her work, starting with *El Agua Viva* (The Living Water) in 1979. Their project would revolve around two natural elements, soil and water, which meet at the shore. Having both grown up by the sea—Viji in Mangalore, Merián in Puerto Rico—they imagine traveling back to the shores of their childhood together to mine for material.

## Amy and Vijay: Absurdist Movement Theater—"Sitting"

They sit on terraced stone steps, hands on knees, feet parallel, as the sunshine streams in. Vijay leans away, expanding his chest and extending his right leg forward as his gaze looks off into the distance, a king or warrior at rest. Amy slumps backwards onto her elbows and crosses her ankles, postmodern casual. She looks at him.

Zazen.<sup>25</sup> Aramandi.<sup>26</sup> Cross-legged. Uttanasana.<sup>27</sup> A variety of lokadharmi (pedestrian) and stylized sitting postures unfold, the stillness of the sitting punctuated by quick or deliberate changes, casual and furtive glances at each other, and sudden melodramatic emotion—the invasion of the navarasa<sup>28</sup>—dropped as quickly as it comes. Rhythm appears out of stillness. Cross-legged, Amy starts chanting "Om..." and Vijay is overcome by grief, shrieking and wailing. Clapping loudly, he is a nattuvanar<sup>29</sup> gone awry: "OMM! Takita Tom! OMM! Takita Tom!" Standing up, Amy climbs up and down the stairs, stomping her feet in cross-rhythms to Vijay's solkattu. "Ta!" [slap] "Ta!" [slap]. Minimalist at first, the piece's absurd juxtapositions culminate with Amy singing a Kelis hip-hop song as Vijay boldly carves through space with Bharatanatyam lines and arcs, feet slapping strongly against the lyrics: "My milkshake brings all the boys to the yard/And they're like, 'It's better than yours'/Damn right, It's better than yours...."

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<sup>24</sup> According to [Wikipedia](#), "The ba gua are eight diagrams used in Taoist cosmology to represent the fundamental principles of reality."

<sup>25</sup> Sitting meditation from Japanese Zen practice.

<sup>26</sup> Half-sitting position in Bharatanatyam.

<sup>27</sup> Chair pose in yoga.

<sup>28</sup> The nine emotions of Sanskrit aesthetic theory, often employed in abhinaya, or emotional expression, in Indian classical dance.

<sup>29</sup> A nattuvanar recites the solkattu, or rhythmic syllables, and keeps time by playing cymbals during a Bharatanatyam performance.



## Endings which are Beginnings

*Time Out!* was the formation of a temporary home, co-choreographing a provisional intercultural community that would dissolve after ten days. *Time Out!* was sitting together in a circle on a concrete floor; helping each other light a musky mosquito coil at night; chatting in traffic and on our twin beds. *Time Out!* was taking the time to listen—to the journeys of others, to the rumblings of the self, to the subtleties of the body. *Time Out!* was an encounter with unfamiliar ways of moving, placing disparate life experiences and artistic discourses in the same time-space to see what might emerge. *Time Out!* was starting to dance with another person across difference, the identification of common ground, forging of friendships, dreaming of new artistic territory. *Time Out!* was the planting of seeds, the starting of a conversation, an open hand reaching to connect with another, two hands placed together in namaskar.

## Biography of Cynthia Ling Lee

Choreographer and writer Cynthia Ling Lee instigates thoughtful, friction-filled dialogues between American postmodern dance and North Indian classical kathak. [www.cynthialinglee.com](http://www.cynthialinglee.com)

All photos by Cynthia Ling Lee unless otherwise noted.

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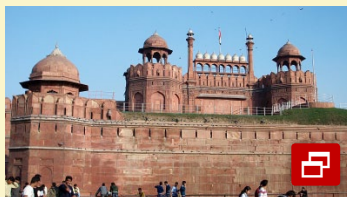
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## Related Image & Video Galleries

Additional photos and videos can be seen in the following participants' galleries:



[Vijay Palaparty](#)



[Nalini Prakash](#)



[Merián Soto](#)



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# *Time Out!—India*

## Appendices

### Appendix A

**A Question of Odyssey (concept statement)**

### Appendix B

**Letter of introduction from Mark Taylor to participants with outline of retreat questions**

**Phase I: Philadelphia**

*Context: culture, influences, taste, background*

**Phase II: Delhi**

*Delineation/Self-definition/Differentiation*

**Phase III: Delhi**

*What is My Process in Creating Work?*

*Collaboration*

### Appendix C

**Working Schedule, February 1–10, 2010**

## APPENDIX A:

# A Question of Odyssey: Why Travel Away From Home? Why India?

Dance Advance in India, February 1-10, 2010

BY BILL BISSELL, DIRECTOR

Dance Advance, a program of The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, sponsors trips for the professional development of its artist constituents. These trips enable us to see work and to meet colleagues in contexts outside of Philadelphia. In February 2010, Dance Advance will organize such a trip to India.

This trip, as with other trips we have sponsored, emphasizes the importance of interrogating ideas that inform creative practice. All of our professional development activities, to some extent, turn over the questions “How do we see?” and “What part of our artistic decision making is made out of choice, what part out of habit?” Through such interrogation and questioning of patterned ways of seeing, Dance Advance seeks to establish a more informed context for understanding our dance-making impulses. Is it possible that we may encounter each other in a space where examining differences and similarities facilitate articulation of our own processes? Though a group experience, this trip is ultimately about the individual journey of each participant.

On this trip we will visit the unfamiliar; we will review different approaches to the body, and look at how specific dance traditions manifest a particular range of gestural response. Through these activities and the ensuing discussions, it is hoped that we may step outside what is comfortable and refresh our capacity to identify the nature of the ideas we hold as core values. Discussion will focus on particular attributes of our practice. Through this process of reflection we will be able to think more deeply about how we function in relationship to our own body.

As travelers we will be bombarded by visual, aural, and olfactory stimuli. Finding artistic inspiration in the content or source material we encounter is not the goal of this trip. Our visit is not about creating new content for our dances. Rather, this trip is about understanding the nature of how and why our bodies dance. It will be about joining ecstasy with other systems of intelligence. The intention of the discussions and practicum will be to utilize this opportunity as a way to mark off a special time for thinking, allowing us to go more deeply into what we know (ideas) and feel (soma). We will suspend our habits as, in a contradictory tension, we examine them more closely.

India is a vast and complicated nation—a collection of many ideas, traditions, historic forces, and vastly different geographies and peoples. It is also a context where the image of the dance is deeply impressed into its historicized sense of nationhood.

The many dance traditions and practices of India are beyond the scope of our trip. We will anchor ourselves with fellow artists from the Centre for Mohiniyattam in Delhi. Our schedule will be comprised of daily body practice, followed by sharing between the artists and discussions on and about what we individually identify as “our work.” Additionally, it is hoped that we will have meetings with guest dance or visual artists as part of our schedule.

## APPENDIX B:

January 25, 2010

### TIME OUT!

Dear Amy, Kun-Yang, Merián, Nalini, Vijay, and Viji:

I'm writing on behalf of Bill Bissell of Dance Advance, Vijayalakshmi and Bharati Shivaji of the Centre for Mohiniattam, and myself to welcome you to the **Time Out!** professional development project. I have been invited—with Vijayalakshmi and Bharati Shivaji—to facilitate the project, which Bill has framed in many ways: as an intercultural encounter, a group experience, an opportunity to question patterned ways of seeing, and an examination of our own creative practice.

I understand the **Time Out!** retreat as an opportunity for you to contemplate your work, in part by entering into a dialogue among people from diverse cultures, who represent many different ways of working. By offering a brief respite from the pressures of daily life, and by stimulating your senses through a change of venue, we hope that the retreat can be a catalyst for reconsidering and renovating your vision as a creative artist. During the retreat you will be invited to reconsider your personal history and how it affects your work; to assess your body of work up to the current moment; and to dream yourself into the future.

Underlying all those words is the simple invitation to take a breath and ask the question: who am I as a human and as an artist?

The project will encompass a short phase consisting of two meetings in Philadelphia and a longer retreat in Delhi, where we will be centered at Sanskriti, a residential retreat center (<http://www.sanskritifoundation.org/>). For Delhi, we are working with Vijayalakshmi and Bharati Shivaji to design a program that includes the following elements:

- Working with our bodies in somatic movement awareness—an esthetically neutral embodiment technique (facilitated by Mark)
- Exploration of the basic elements of Mohiniattam, a dance form native to Kerala (facilitated by Bharati Shivaji and Vijayalakshmi)
- Facilitated discussions, group meetings, and collaborative woolgathering
- Exposure to places of interest in Delhi
- Access to Delhi cultural life (performances, museums, and galleries)
- Free time.

While we will offer you this structure for the encounter, it is only a suggestion, and we remain open to making changes as a group, once we are together and our priorities become clear.

Many thanks and looking forward,

Mark Taylor  
Center for BodyMindMovement

## PHASE I: PHILADELPHIA

During our meetings in Philadelphia, one of the goals is to begin to get to know each other as artists. During those introductory sessions you will have a short time to introduce yourself to the group. In preparation, please read the following questions regarding the context of your work. You might choose to introduce yourself by elaborating on your response to one or more of the questions, or you might choose an entirely different way of stepping forward. You do not need to prepare your introduction. Just show up with some passion around some aspect of yourself!

CONTEXT: CULTURE, INFLUENCES, TASTE, BACKGROUND

### **Culture**

What is the culture<sup>1</sup> of my family of origin? How does that culture affect my current work? Does my family's cultural tradition align with the prevailing culture where I live and with my current work? If so, do I experience that as a strength or as a limitation? If not, how do I negotiate those two parts of myself?

### **Values**

What are my personal values (political, social, interpersonal, spiritual)? How has my work shaped my values, and how have my values shaped my work? Have they evolved together with time, or have they been consistent? Have my work and my values ever been in conflict?

### **Training**

What was my original dance training? How does that training serve me, and how does it limit me? Who were my primary or most important teachers? What part of their legacy do I treasure, and what part do I reject? How do I train myself now as an artist? How does that training serve me, and how does it limit me?

### **Appetites**

What are my tastes as an arts consumer; which media, what aspects of popular culture, traditional arts, contemporary work, etc. Does my current work relate to what I am passionate about as a consumer? Should it?

What moves me?

Am I excited about what I am doing at the moment artistically? Why do I continue to make dances?

### **Life Choices**

What are the current circumstances of my life that support my process? What are those that limit my process? What changes can I make in my circumstances that will feed my work?

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<sup>1</sup> Culture: 1) An integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for symbolic thought and social learning. 2) The set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution, organization or group



## PHASE II: DELHI

The first part of our time together in Delhi will be dedicated to deepening our understanding of the work of each participant. With help as needed from the facilitators and the group, you will be asked to explore questions regarding your self-image and self-definition as an artist. You will be encouraged to address several areas of inquiry, including (but not limited to) how you speak about your work; what your persona is as an artist; and what you imagine the trajectory and current state of your development to be.

Prior to your dedicated time please read and feel into the questions below, as a starting point for the use of your time. You may choose to speak directly to one or more of the questions, to be interviewed, to move, to ask questions of the group, or to invent ways of responding. Please remember that you have no obligation to perform, to impress, or to excel: the time is intended to be a support for your process—a sacred moment of reflection.

### DELINEATION/SELF-DEFINITION/DIFFERENTIATION

#### Speaking About My Work

What is my “elevator speech” about my work? (Describing my artistic profile in a nutshell—the time I have to articulate it to a non-dancer during an elevator ride.)

- How do I position my work in relationship to my cultural background and dance history?
- How do I position my work in relationship to contemporary dance and culture?
- How do I position my work in relationship to my vision of the future?

#### My Persona as an Artist

General considerations:

- What have been and will be the physical demands related to my artistic development?
- What are the emotional aspects of my being that support or inhibit my artistic development?
- How does my artistic development reflect my personal psychological journey?
- What is the spiritual aspect of my artistic development?

In my art-making:

- In what way am I a craftsman, refining techniques passed down to me from previous generations?
- In what way am I an explorer of a recognized but unmapped terrain?
- In what way am I an iconoclast, destroying what has come before me?
- In what way am I an innovator, charting new paths into the unknown?
- In what way am I a visionary, listening to my inner voice for inspiration?

#### Current Status

What have I achieved in my work to date? What have I yet to achieve?

APPENDIX B, continued:

At this point in my career:

- Am I doing what is most comfortable—on “automatic pilot”? How long have I been doing this? Have I ever done this? Why would I seek change?
- Am I refining or exploring an existing body of work? How will I know when that body of work is complete?
- Am I taking risks, jumping off a cliff into something totally new? If so, how do I know this: by comparison to my past work, by subjective analysis, by feedback from others?

PHASE III: DELHI

The final phase of **Time Out!** will focus on issues relating to process and collaboration. We propose to use several short periods of time as a laboratory for the initiation and planning of collaborative projects between participants: by going through those steps in a considered way we can observe ourselves as we enter a collaborative relationship. (The collaborative projects are not intended to actually initiate ongoing projects or collaborative relationships.)

The following questions may be helpful in framing your work together.

WHAT IS MY PROCESS IN CREATING WORK?

Is there a typical starting point for my work? How do I allow my deep themes to emerge? Is my research for new work grounded in the external environment (text, music, politics, narrative, images, other media), in my internal environment (emotions, psychological movement, sensory experience, physical investigation), or in a combination of the two?

Do I gravitate toward content as the foundation of my work and let the form be dictated by the material, or do I gravitate toward formal elements as I initiate my work and allow content to emerge?

Is my work an ongoing fabric, or does it emerge in discreet units of investigation?

How do I work with and develop movement? What is my style of editing, refining, and clarifying my work?

How and when do I consider the use of music, design, and other elements?

To what degree do I create work for specific performance sites? Does my choice of venue determine, alter, or affect my process?

## COLLABORATION

### **Definition**

What is collaboration, and who do I consider to be my collaborators? (Other artists, dancers, composers, musicians, costumers, designers, technicians, stage personnel, audience members?)

What are the benefits of collaboration for me, and what are the drawbacks?

### **My role**

Am I more comfortable working alone or in context of a group? How do I negotiate gaps between my needs and those of my collaborators?

Do I need to control the work I am making, or do I allow the contributions of collaborators to shape my thinking?

Am I more comfortable and successful in a leadership role, in a give-and-take role, or in a receptive role when I work with collaborators? Do I have the capacity to work in multiple styles with regard to collaborators?

### **How collaboration plays out for me**

Do I enjoy exploring and learning about vocabularies and forms quite different than my own, or am I most comfortable working within my own form?

How do I support my collaborative relationships? How do I undermine my collaborative relationships?

How do I approach using or resolving conflict with my collaborators? Does it always need to be resolved? Is conflict helpful in any way?

## APPENDIX C:

1/24/11

### **Time Out!**      **Dance Advance/Professional Development Trip to Delhi, India** **February 1-10, 2010**

Revised: 2/1/10

#### **WORKING SCHEDULE— SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

##### **Artistic Facilitators:**

Bharati Shivaji  
Vijayalakshmi  
Manjula  
Mark Taylor

##### **Artist Participants:**

Kun-Yang Lin  
Vijay Palaparty  
Nalini Prakash  
Viji Rao  
Amy Smith  
Merian Soto

##### **Artist Documentation:**

Cynthia Lee

##### **Director:**

Bill Bissell

#### **LOGISTICS**

##### **Communication and scheduling:**

*Due to the nature of planning a busy trip like this one, scheduled activities may change or shift.* For instance, group meal times may require flexibility. Please maintain close communication with Mark Taylor to be aware of current changes to the day's events. Dance Advance guests are expected to attend all trip activities, including changes and additions to the schedule.

##### **Meals:**

The retreat center will provide our regular meals. Offsite group meals are part of our group activities, and will be paid by Dance Advance. (Please note group meal times may shift depending on the day's activities.) Usually meals will be an opportunity for some focused discussion among the group and are seen as part of the purpose of the trip. Meals outside the retreat center and not hosted by Dance Advance as indicated on this schedule will not be reimbursed by the program.

##### **Do not use tap water for drinking or brushing your teeth, or use ice made from tap water.**

Drink only pasteurized milk. Carbonated drinks, hot drinks, or bottled drinks (if the seal on the bottle isn't broken) are generally safe to drink. Do not eat raw fruits and vegetable unless you peel them. Do not eat raw leafy vegetables (lettuce spinach, cabbage as they are hard to clean) or raw or rare meats. Do not buy food from street vendors. Eat hot, well-cooked foods.

<http://adam.about.com/encyclopedia/nutrition/Travelers-diarrhea-diet.htm>

##### **Transportation:**

Group travel indicated on this schedule will be paid by Dance Advance. All other travel arrangements or changes must be made and paid for by individuals and will not be reimbursed by Dance Advance. Please note this includes travel to and from the Philadelphia Airport. Adjustments to airfare are the responsibility of the individual traveler.

##### **Packing and attire:**

Please remember to bring business cards for introductions.

Casual attire is fine; just consider the climate changes (average low 50<sup>0</sup> F., average high 70<sup>0</sup> F) and cool evenings. Interior spaces do not have central heating.

Please bring a yoga mat or blanket for working on the floor.

**\*Please no cell phones or texting during meals and discussions\***

**APPENDIX C, continued:**

**Saturday, January 30**

| Time    | Event                                    | Notes            |
|---------|--|------------------|
| 6:15 am | Mark departs from PIT to Newark (EWR)    | Continental 3116 |
| 8:00 am | Mark arrives EWR; then on his own in NYC |                  |

**Sunday, January 31**

| Time    | Event                       | Notes          |
|---------|-----------------------------|----------------|
| 6:45 pm | Mark checks in at EWR       |                |
| 9:20 pm | Mark departs to Delhi (DEL) | Continental 82 |

**Monday, February 1**

| Time     | Event   | Notes   |
|----------|---|---|
| 10:20 am | Cynthia departs from LAX to Newark (EWR)        | Continental 16  |
| 4:00 pm  | Bill picks up Nalini                            |   |
| 4:20 pm  | Bill picks up Kun-Yang, Amy, Merian             | Chi Movement Arts Center<br>1316 South 9th Street                                       |
| 4:45 pm  | Bill picks up Viji                              | Cornwells Heights Septa Station<br>799 Station Avenue near Bristol Pike<br>Bensalem, PA |
| 6:30 pm  | Philly group checks in at EWR                   |   |
| 6:40 pm  | Cynthia arrives EWR; meets up with Philly group | Terminal C  |
| 8:45 pm  | DA group departs to Delhi (DEL)                 | Continental 82  |
| 9:20 pm  | Mark arrives DEL; picked up by Vijayalakshmi    |   |

**Tuesday, February 2**

| Time    | Event   | Notes  |
|---------|---|--|
| 9:20 pm | DA group arrives DEL- Terminal 2 lower level;<br>picked up by Vijayalakshmi; transfer to retreat center | Sanskriti<br>C-11, Qutab Institutional Area<br>New Delhi-110 016 |
| 9:45 pm | Vijay arrives DEL - Terminal 1C; Mark coordinates pick<br>up with Vijaya                                | Spice Jet: SG 308  |
|         | Light supper offered at Sanskriti   |  |

**Wednesday, February 3**

| Time                  | Event  | Notes                   |
|-----------------------|--|-------------------------|
| 9:30 am               | Welcome and orientation with Mark Taylor, Bharati<br>Shivaji Vijayalakshmi and Manjula |                         |
| 10:00 am—<br>11:30 am | Practicum with Mark  |                         |
| 11:45am—<br>1:15 pm   | Practicum with Bharati Shivaji, Vijayalakshmi,   |                         |
|                       | Break/Lunch  |                         |
| 3:00 pm—<br>8:00 pm   | Delhi Orientation/Tour #1  | Old Delhi area          |
| 8:00 pm               | Dinner offsite   | Restaurant in Old Delhi |

Time Out! Schedule 2



**APPENDIX C, continued:**

**Thursday, February 4**

| Time                  | Event                                  | Notes   |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| 8:30 am—<br>10:00 am  | Practicum with Mark                    |   |
| 10:15 am—<br>11:45 am | Practicum with Vijayalakshmi           |   |
|                       | Break                                  |   |
| 1:00 pm—<br>5:00 pm   | Delhi Orientation/Tour #2              | Humayun's Tomb then visit Bangla Sahib Gurudwara in Connaught Place |
| 5:00 pm—<br>6:20 pm   | Personal process discussion with Amy   |   |
| 6:30 pm—<br>7:50 pm   | Personal process discussion with Vijay |   |
| 8:00 pm               | Dinner at Sanskriti                    |   |

**Friday, February 5**

| Time                  | Event   | Notes                        |
|-----------------------|---|------------------------------|
| 8:30 am—<br>10:00 am  | Practicum with Mark   |                              |
| 10:15 am—<br>11:45 am | Practicum with Vijayalakshmi  |                              |
|                       | Break   |                              |
| 1:00 pm—<br>2:20 pm   | Personal process discussion with Merian   |                              |
| 2:30 pm—<br>3:50 pm   | Personal process discussion with Viji   |                              |
| TBD                   | Dinner  | Before or after performance? |
| 6.15 pm               | Vasantotsava Dance & Music Festival, Kamani Auditorium - Bharatanatyam recital by Anirudhha Knight, followed by Kathak recital by Madhavi Jhala and Mamata Maharaj and Thumri and Abinaya by Sitara Devi, Girija Devi and Pandit Birju Maharaj. |                              |

**Saturday, February 6**

| Time                  | Event  | Notes                               |
|-----------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| 8:30 am—<br>10:00 am  | Practicum with Mark  |                                     |
| 10:15 am—<br>11:45 am | Practicum with Vijayalakshmi   |                                     |
|                       | Break  |                                     |
| 1:00 pm—<br>2:20 pm   | Personal process discussion with Nalini  |                                     |
| 2:30 pm—<br>3:50 pm   | Personal process discussion with Kun-Yang  |                                     |
| 7.30 pm               | Bonjour India Festival -Orchestra - A fusion of Flute, Congo, Guitar, Tabla, keyboard and violin, composed by Manoranjan Dey. Followed by catered Dinner at CFM? | ALLIANCE FRANCAISE 72, Lodhi Estate |

Time Out! Schedule 3

**APPENDIX C, continued:**

**Sunday, February 7**

| Time                 | Event   | Notes                   |
|----------------------|---|-------------------------|
| 9:00 am—<br>10:30 am | <i>Two Cultures, One Body</i> (Discussion of intercultural art-making and collaboration facilitated by Cynthia) |                         |
| 11:30 am—<br>2:30 pm | BodyMindMovement Workshop with invited guests from the Delhi dance community                                    |                         |
| 3:00 pm—<br>4:00 pm  | Informal performance and discussion: Vijayalakshmi and/or Bharati Shivaji                                       |                         |
| 4:00 pm              | Delhi Orientation/Tour #3   | Qutab Minar, Tuglakabad |

**Monday, February 8**

| Time                  | Event  | Notes  |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| 8:30 am—<br>10:00 am  | Practicum with Mark  |  |
| 10:15 am—<br>11:45 am | Practicum with Vijayalakshmi   |  |
|                       | Break  |  |
| 1:00 pm—<br>3:00 pm   | Choreography collaboration #1 (working with a partner from a different culture: quick problem-solving, negotiation, finding common ground, common interests, way of working) |  |
| 3:00 pm—<br>6:00 pm   | Delhi tour #4  | Purana Quila, India gate, Rashtrapati Bhavan |
| 6:00 pm               | Ayurvedic Food Lecture/Dinner offsite  | India International Center                   |
|                       | Ayurvedic Dinner   | India International Center                   |

**Tuesday, February 9**

| Time                  | Event   | Notes  |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| 8:30 am—<br>10:00 am  | Practicum with Mark   |  |
| 10:15 am—<br>11:45 am | Practicum with Vijayalakshmi  |  |
|                       | Break   |  |
| 1:00 pm—<br>3:00 pm   | Choreography collaboration #2 (movement development, performance and/or discussion) |  |
| 3:00 pm—<br>3:45 pm   | Discussion of partnerships  |  |
| 3:45 pm               | Assignment of thought-problem for next day  |  |
| 4:00 pm               | Departure   | Lodhi Gardens: most beautiful garden of Delhi (and possibly India)                                   |
| 7:30 pm               | Dinner at India International Centre  | Dinner hosted by Centre for Mohiniattam for Time Out participants, with key supporters of the Centre |

**APPENDIX C, continued:**

**Wednesday, February 10**

| Time                 | Event   | Notes          |
|----------------------|---|----------------|
| 8:30 am—<br>10:30 am | Physical practice with Mark and/or Vijayalakshmi  |                |
| 11:00 am—<br>1:30 pm | Summary meeting (personal reflections on the trip, the encounter, and future artistic collaboration/vision) |                |
| 1:30 pm—<br>2:30 pm  | Lunch onsite  |                |
| Afternoon            | Shopping trip to Dilli Haat - a great place to shop for Indian handicrafts and gifts.                       |                |
| 7:30 pm              | Leave for DEL   |                |
| 8:30 pm              | Kun-Yang, Amy, Merian, Nalini, Cynthia check in at airport  |                |
| 11:35 pm             | Depart to Newark (EWR)  | Continental 83 |
|                      | Mark, Viji and Vijay remain in India  |                |

**Thursday, February 11**

| Time    | Event   | Notes            |
|---------|---|------------------|
| 4:30 am | Kun-Yang, Amy, Merian, Nalini, Cynthia arrive EWR |                  |
| 6:40 am | Cynthia departs to LAX                            | Continental 91   |
| 7:40 am | Kun-Yang, Amy, Merian, Nalini, depart to PHL      | Continental 8801 |
| 8:59 am | Arrive PHL  |                  |
| 9:55 am | Cynthia arrives LAX                               |                  |

**Saturday, February 13**

| Time     | Event                     | Notes          |
|----------|---------------------------|----------------|
| 7:30 pm  | Viji leaves for DEL       |                |
| 8:30 pm  | Viji checks in at airport |                |
| 11:35 pm | Depart to Newark (EWR)    | Continental 83 |

**Sunday, February 14**

| Time    | Event   | Notes      |
|---------|---|------------|
| 4:30 am | Viji arrives EWR; Please take Amtrak back to Philly |            |
| 7:08 am | Viji's train departs                                | Amtrak 131 |

**All participants: your report is due to Dance Advance on the trip no later than March 12, 2010**